

CONGREGATIONAL REVITALIZATION  
THROUGH SMALL GROUP MINISTRY  
AT COKESBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A professional project submitted to the Theological School of  
Drew University in partial fulfillment of the  
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Doctor of Ministry

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## ABSTRACT

### CONGREGATIONAL REVITALIZATION THROUGH SMALL GROUP MINISTRY AT COKESBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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This project was an attempt to explore the importance of small group ministries in which Jesus Himself participated by implementing a small group system into the life style of Cokesbury. Through this project, I wanted people at Cokesbury United Methodist Church to understand the potential for small group ministries and show how small groups can change congregational vitality. The intention of this project is to help participants open their hearts and find the joy of meeting Jesus Christ.

The scope of this Doctor of Ministry Project was limited to 12 members of the *Bennett* Sunday school. Participants met once a week during the season of Lent. In this small group, participants were asked to develop a deep and personal relationship with one another and with God to support their Christian life and faith. In the small group meeting, the participants prayed with one another and sought God together. Through this project, they listened to others about how God was influencing their lives in a small group.

Through this project, I witnessed the joy on the participants' faces when they listened to each other's faith journey about how God was influencing their lives in small groups. Later in our evaluation of the project, the participants said, "It brought warmth to

my heart,” “Bible study uplifts,” “It has helped me stay spiritually focused,” “It was an awesome fellowship,” “This is a very positive group because of the spiritual fellowship.”

I pray that small group ministries at Cokesbury will continue to offer a more intense and personal encounter of faith and grace within the context of mutual encouragement, love, and care. I also pray that a small group ministry at Cokesbury United Methodist Church will help revitalize the congregation and offer an opportunity for Cokesbury to grow deeper in our love for God and change the people’s lives as Henry Cloud witnessed in his book *Making Small Groups Work*.

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### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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I also want to thank my mother in law, Douk Ryun Pak, for her consistent prayers, which has been source of strength along the journey.

The support and encouragement from my lovely wife, Esther Kim, and three children, Hanbin, Eunbin, and Wonbin, has been source of strength along the journey. I would not be where I am doing what I do today without my wife's prayers.

I also want to thank the faithful members of Cokesbury United Methodist Church for being the inspiration for this project. Your openness to new and unfamiliar concepts helped me deal with an unsettling question of how to make effective disciple of Christ.

Lastly, I express my warmest appreciation for the faculty of the Theological School of Drew University, particularly Dr. Robert J. Duncan, Jr. for your pastoral insights. Your thoughts, comments, and input helped me understand more about the pastoral ministry. Your contributions are so important and are greatly appreciated.

## CHAPTER I.

### *INTRODUCTION*

All Christians are chosen people and a royal priesthood (1Peter 2:9), and “we are all called to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”<sup>1</sup> This is our mission and commandment Jesus gave us in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

And yet, “churches have been in serious decline over the last several decades in the United States of America. The Presbyterians, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, United Church of Christ, Episcopalians, and most other denominations have been steadily declining membership for the past half century.”<sup>2</sup> For example, “in 1968, there was 11 million United Methodists in the United States attending 42,000 churches.”<sup>3</sup> “By 2015, there were 7.1 million members in almost 32,148 churches.”<sup>4</sup> That is a drop-off during those 46 years of 35% in membership and 23% in the number of congregations.

United Methodists aren’t the only Christian faith group that is declining in memberships. “The Presbyterians Church (USA), the news is worse: in 1968, there were 4 million members in more than 12,000 churches. By 2003, there were 2.4 million members in 11,000 churches – a decline of 40% in membership and 8 % in the church congregations. But the decline is hardly limited to mainline Protestants. Gallup organization polling data show that the percentage of Americans who identify themselves

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<sup>1</sup> *The book of discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 2008), ¶121

<sup>2</sup> Albert L. Winseman, *Growing an engaged church: how to stop “doing church” and start being the church again*. (New York: Gallup Press, 2007), 4

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> United Methodist Communications, “Data Services,” The United Methodist Church, , accessed March 07, 2017, <http://www.umc.org/gcfa/data-services>.

as Southern Baptist has declined by more than half in the past decades: from 10% in 1995 to 4% in 2005.”<sup>5</sup>

Cokesbury United Methodist Church where I served was not different from those churches declining in membership. Cokesbury United Methodist Church had a church crisis due to the lack of spiritual leadership prior to my appointment. Some of parishioners left the church because of the conflicts between the previous pastor and congregation. The church has been struggling financially over the last several years before I came to Cokesbury United Methodist Church. Finally, the former clergy left the church involuntarily. The relationship of the two parties (the former clergy and congregation) of an emotional triangle was kept in balance by the way the third party (Bishop) relates to their relationship. Even though the church lost balance due to the conflicts between clergy and laity in the church, Cokesbury United Methodist Church has experienced vitality and growth over the last three years and now is in the process of maintaining “Homeostasis.”<sup>6</sup>

Being in ministry for 10 years, I knew all the responsibilities of the pastors, going through the church seasons year after year preaching the Gospel, administering the sacrament, welcoming new persons into the church, leading them to Christ, nurturing and teaching, and then sending them out to be the body of Christ for the transformation of the world. Being engaged in church ministry, I came up with the unsettling question of how

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<sup>5</sup> United Methodist Communications, “Data Services,” The United Methodist Church, , accessed March 07, 2017, <http://www.umc.org/gcfa/data-services>.

<sup>6</sup> Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2011), 202-203.



to make effective disciples so that the church can revitalize and be the place of worship and fellowship where people can grow in their faith and be true disciple of Christ.

In order to make Cokesbury United Methodist Church effective in making disciples, it was imperative for me to explore the goal of evangelism that Peter Beyerhaus made in his Lausanne Plenary address and why he stressed that “the goal of evangelism is not only to make individual believers” but “to persuade these believers to be incorporated as responsible members into the church as God's Messianic community.”<sup>7</sup>

What is the Goal of Evangelism? The word *evangelism* comes from the Greek word, *euaggelizo*, which means to announce good news. Evangelism is telling people the Good News about Jesus. But why do we tell people the Good News? What is our goal in that? Our goal, therefore, is for people to know the *evangelistic mandate*, which has its origin the Great Commission given Matthew 28:19-20:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20, NRSV).

The Great Commission narrates four action verbs: go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. And yet, Wagner in his book, *Church growth and the whole Gospel*, asserts that “In the original Greek three of them, go, baptize, and teach, are participles or helping verbs. Only one, make disciples, is an imperative verb. It is clear exegetically that the

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Beyerhaus, *World evangelization and the kingdom of God* (Lausanne: International Congress on World Evangelization, 1974), 288.

goal of the Great Commission is to make disciples.”<sup>8</sup> This is because *going* in itself will not achieve the Great Commission Jesus gave us. Neither will *baptizing* nor *teaching* itself fulfill the command of Jesus. But at the same time it is also true that no one can make disciples without *going*, *baptizing*, and *teaching*. These three verbs carry extremely important messages because they are essential for the task of the Great Commission. Therefore, these four verbs are integral part of the evangelistic mandate. The biblical idea of evangelical mandates is associated with what constitutes a *disciple* and how that fit into the postmodern use of the word *discipleship*.

I tried to go, make disciples, baptize, and teach the gospel to the un-churched people for the first two years in my church ministry at Cokesbury. And yet, it did not really work out because the majority of congregations did not want to get out of their comfort zone and welcome the un-churched people in the community. They were concerned about the life of church in 10 to 20 years after those elderly members pass away. However, some of the lay leaders were not mature enough to embrace those new members. These people are coming to church regularly and serving in the community, but they did not know the importance of evangelism and why Jesus gave us the Great Commission.

In order to revitalize the congregation, each member in a local church has to grow spiritually and become a mature Christian to complete the Great Commission Jesus gave us. This project is an attempt to explore the practical way of revitalizing the congregation

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<sup>8</sup> C. Peter. Wagner, *Church growth and the whole Gospel: a biblical mandate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998), 54-55.

through small group ministry with members of *Bennett* Sunday school group because they are the backbone of the church.

The scope of this project was limited to 15 members of the *Bennett* Sunday school. Participants were asked to meet once a week during the season of Lent. Participants in this small group were asked to develop a deep and personal relationship one another and support for their Christian life and faith.

This small group project with *Bennett* became an incubator in which the other small Sunday school groups of *Patton* (B-Boomers) and *John Roberts* (Gen-X) could develop a deep and personal relationship one another and support for their Christian life and faith. In the small group meeting the participants prayed with one another and sought God together. Through this project, they listened to others about how God was influencing their lives in small groups. Henry Cloud witnessed in his book, *Making Small Groups Work*:

“We have seen members of Christ’s body grow in truly amazing ways, past what we thought possible, when *all the parts* were doing their *work*. We believe wholeheartedly in the power of small groups, and every day we receive letters and testimonials from people who enter into the process with fear and trembling, but come out with new life.”<sup>9</sup>

I pray that small group ministry can offer an opportunity for Cokesbury United Methodist Church to grow deeper in our love for God and the people’s lives will be changed through being in a small group.

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<sup>9</sup> Henry Cloud and John Sims Townsend, *Making small groups work: what every small group leader needs to know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 16.

## CHAPTER II.

### *CONTEXT OF COKESBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH*

To explore and understand the narrative of Cokesbury United Methodist Church, I think about the contexts out of which I speak and continue to learn from critical pastoral and theological reflection, which begins with reflection on my church situations confronted in the real stories of discipleship and ministry. Along with my pastoral and theological reflection, I have explored my terrain of the church since it is the context in which I explore all the nooks and crannies of current narratives, situations, opportunities, concerns, and more.

- **The Narrative of Church**

Cokesbury United Methodist Church is located in Stedman, North Carolina and has an average worship attendance of 90-100 people that offers a variety of ministry opportunities through worship, fellowship, and outreach. Stedman is a suburban area of metro Fayetteville. Many congregations live in Fayetteville and commute to work in Fayetteville. Members of the church have different socio-economic backgrounds (Teachers, Farmers, Engineers, Hairdressers, Newspaper Writer, Firefighters, Officers in the army, Retired Minister, Businessman, Physician Assistant, Pharmacist, Retired professor, etc.).

Our relation with God has gone to a deeper and deeper level with the Lord through church activities. Church has programs such as Tuesday Bible Study (*Growing in Christ* for the beginners and those people who want to grow up in Christ), Wednesday Bible Study (*The Alpha Course* and *The Efirid Bible Study Series*) with prayer meetings,

Praise Team, Worship Ensemble, Wednesday fellowship dinner, Toddler programs during Sunday Worship Service, Teens Activities every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women meeting at every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, young women and senior women's circle at every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday, Monthly Shepherd Prayer Meeting at every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday, Daily contribution with the Upper Room, and a new church website. We focused on Easter & Christmas Cantatas and VBS. On Easter Sunday in 2013, the church choir sang Easter Cantata and the attendance of that Sunday was 170.

Cokesbury United Methodist Church has a good opportunity to grow since it has a good mixture of children, youth, young adults, and senior adults. Members of our church have grown spiritually over the last three years. And this drives me to step further into the issue of *congregational revitalization* through small group ministry. Bill Easum and John Atkinson remind us that small groups are the church's best answer for congregation vitality. Bill Easum and John Atkinson say, "Small group is the first line of personal care for the hurts and needs of the people in my church. People should join a small group before they need one. Small groups should be about the application of God's Word to our daily lives through fellowship and discussion. When this happens real relationships are built."<sup>10</sup> Psychological and relational healing happens as people open up with others; small groups can help the parish share life together and discover how the love of God transforms their hearts.

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<sup>10</sup> William M. Easum and John Atkinson, *Go big with small groups: eleven steps to an explosive small group ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 5.

Cokesbury United Methodist Church has small groups organized by the age of the members: Bennett, Patton, John Roberts, Youth, and Children. Each small group meets at 10am on Sunday except special occasions. Only two small groups, *Bennet* and *Patton*, offer solid faith reflection.

<b>Sunday School by the age group</b>	<b>Generation</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Meeting Times</b>
Bennett	Builder (1901-1924) & Silent (1925-1945)	17	10am: Sunday
Patton	B-Boomers (1946-1960)	15	10am: Sunday
John Roberts	Gen-X (1960-1981)	7	10am: Sunday
Youth	Millennials (1982-2005)	10	10am: Sunday 5pm: 1st & 3rd Sunday
Children	Gene Kids (2006-2026)	12	10am: Sunday, 5pm: Wednesday

(Cokesbury is organized into small Sunday school groups by age.)

Cokesbury United Methodist Church was very strong both spiritually and financially twenty years ago when Builder, Silent, and B-Boomers were the backbone of the church. And yet, many small group members of these groups have passed away, retired, or left our community looking for their life after retirement.

However, *Bennett* (Builder & Silent) is still an active small group of Cokesbury United Methodist Church and has been helping followers to develop their faith in Christ. I believe that one of the ways to revitalize Cokesbury United Methodist Church is

transforming small group members into the disciples of Jesus Christ. In this process the leadership of *Bennett* help the other small groups grow in Christ and become an important body of Christ. When every group member is responsible to walk with Jesus Christ and make a difference in the life of church, they are transformed and incorporated as responsible members into the church as God's Messianic community.

### CHAPTER III.

#### ***BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF SMALL GROUP MINISTRY***

- **Twelve Disciples**

The first small group ministry in the Bible might be Jesus and the twelve disciples. Mark narrates how Jesus called these twelve disciples in the beginnings of his ministry when he writes: “He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message” (Mark 3:13-14, NRSV)

Mark indicates the reason why Jesus called these twelve out of a large crowd was “to be with him.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, Jesus formed this small group for companionship and fellowship, which is a typical dynamic of small group. In this vein, Donahue and Robinson state that “Jesus’ entire public ministry models what it means to live in community.”<sup>12</sup>

We observe that Jesus spent quality time with the Twelve and then sent them out to do ministry. “Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.” (Luke 9:1-2, NRSV)

Donahue and Robinson assert that “Yet, Jesus spent most of his public ministry doing life and ministry together with his little community of twelve disciples. Jesus drew

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<sup>11</sup> Mark 3:14, NRSV

<sup>12</sup> Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a church of small groups: a place where nobody stands alone* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 26.



away from many, and then selected a few to reach the many.”<sup>13</sup> In this vein, they expressed that “Jesus followed the divine pattern of gathering a few so that he would transform many lives.”<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, whether Jesus was feeding the five thousand, hosting the Last Supper meal, or even preparing to make his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the twelve were at his side, acting as a supportive community for their small group leader.

- **Small Group Gathering in the First Century Churches**

Another small group gathering in the New Testament was found in the first century churches:

“Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:38-47, NRSV)

In the second chapter of Acts, Luke states that the number of people who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day— about 3,000 in all. And

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 27.

then, verse 42 and 46 give us a strong evidence being small group community; “Spending much time together in the temple,” “Breaking bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,” “Praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.”

The Apostle Paul wrote in the epistle to the Ephesians about how small groups transform the body of Christ, “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:16, NRSV).

The phrase *the body of Christ* is a common image for the church in the Bible. The church is called “one body in Christ” in Romans 12:15, “one body” in 1 Corinthians 10:17, “the body of Christ” in 1 Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 4:12, and “the body” in Hebrew 13:3. The church functions clearly as “the body of Christ.”

The body of Christ is made up of many parts. 1Corinthians 12:12-14 describe it like this: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.” This means each Christian is an equal part of the body of Christ.

The body of Christ provides us an illustration of much of what athletic team is about. We, as the body of Christ, are a team of players coming together in a common mission so that we will grow together in our love for Jesus Christ, in our love for each other and give ourselves to the mission of introducing and winning people to Jesus Christ.

The mission of the church follows the direction of Jesus, who commanded us in the Great Commission to make disciples. Therefore, the primary tasks of the church are

to preach, administer the sacraments, welcome persons into the church and lead them to Christ, nurture them, and then send them out to be the body of Christ for the world.

I believe that church should be a place where we encounter with the living God and worship the Lord our Creator: “Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker.” (Psalm 95:6, NRSV) The church, therefore, will be a place where the congregation experiences the forgiveness of their sins and then shares the love of God.

I also believe that the church should be an outpost to reach out to its community as a means of providing the Good News through the works of social justice, education, and many kinds of caring ministry because Jesus Christ commissioned his disciples to work with and in the community and in the World. All in all, the church should be a place where our faith can grow and move on to Christian perfection, to get to the point where the believer no longer sins intentionally.

We have witnessed the power the body of Christ wields in a small group through the story of Bay Area Fellowship Church in Texas. Pastor John Atkinson at Bay Area Fellowship Church has witnessed the power of small group ministry when “all the parts” were doing their “work.” Pastor Atkinson started the church with five people in the living room of senior pastor Bil Cornelius's one-bedroom apartment. Seven and half years later (2005) the church is doing seven services a weekend with a weekly attendance of around four thousand people.<sup>15</sup> We have seen members of Christ’s body grow when all the parts were doing their work.

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<sup>15</sup> William M. Easum and John Atkinson, *Go big with small groups: eleven steps to an explosive small group ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), viii.

I strongly believe in the power of small groups. Small group worked as an incubator in which new Christians are bathed in love and care until they blossom. I believe small groups have a Biblical foundation and connect individuals with opportunities for spiritual formation.

- **John Wesley's Class Meeting**

Along with Biblical basis, John Wesley, the founder of United Methodist Church, had a passion for small group movements that involved small, interactive groups called *class*. Wesley believed that the necessity for mutual encouragement, examination, and service, within the context of the means of grace, required more than hearing the Word and participating in the sacraments. He felt the Church of England did not sufficiently provide for the fellowship of Christian people, which he sensed to have been a unique characteristic of the early church.

So Wesley set out to “introduce fellowship where it was utterly destroyed.”<sup>16</sup> He believed that “his class meeting represented the genius of primitive Christianity and God had given him a vision of the way in which these small groups could be the means of spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land.”<sup>17</sup>

The class meetings were not substitutes for the church and its ministry. Rather, the small groups complemented the church by offering a more intense and personal encounter of faith and grace within a context of mutual support, love, and care. Not only

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<sup>16</sup> Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's theology today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 150.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

did this system of small groups conserve the results of the revival preaching, but it also became the principal avenue of pastoral care during the Wesleyan Revival.<sup>18</sup>

The following materials are taken from the writings of John Wesley and his Preachers:

**John Wesley's Rules for the Band-Societies (drawn up Dec. 25, 1738)**

**The design of our meeting is, to obey that command of God, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."**

Below are Wesley's directives, in his words:

1. To meet once a week, at the least.
2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.
3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.
4. To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt, since our last meeting.
5. To end every meeting with prayer, suited to the state of each person present.
6. To desire some person among us; to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations.

**Some of the questions proposed to everyone before he is admitted among us may be to this effect:**

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<sup>18</sup> Outler, Albert Cook. "Pastoral Care in the Wesleyan Spirit." Perkins Journal XXVI, no. 1 (Fall 1971): 5-6.

1. Have you the forgiveness of your sins?
2. Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?
3. Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God?
4. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart?
5. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?
6. Do you desire to be told your faults?
7. Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plain and home?
8. Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you?
9. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you?
10. Do you desire that, in doing this, we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
11. Is it your desire and design to be on this, and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?

**\*Any of the preceding questions may be asked as often as occasion offers; the four following at every meeting:**

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Albert Cook. Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), 180-181.

John Wesley's directives have been important practices of class meeting, which is a specific type of holy gathering and later became central to what it meant to be a Methodist. Class meeting is an adaptation of what Wesley was doing in 1700s England. Methodism begins with a small group. Historically, class meetings "made sure that every Methodist was connected to other Methodists, so no one was left out, ignored, or overlooked," notes the Rev. Kevin Watson, a United Methodist elder and Assistant Professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies at Candler School of Theology.<sup>20</sup>

As it was in the days of Wesley, class meeting still make and shape disciples by connecting people to one another, helping them grow in their discipleship, and encouraging them to mentor each other spiritually. It doesn't happen overnight, but through answering Wesley's directives together during the Class Meetings. When we enter into these types of conversations regularly, lives are changed.

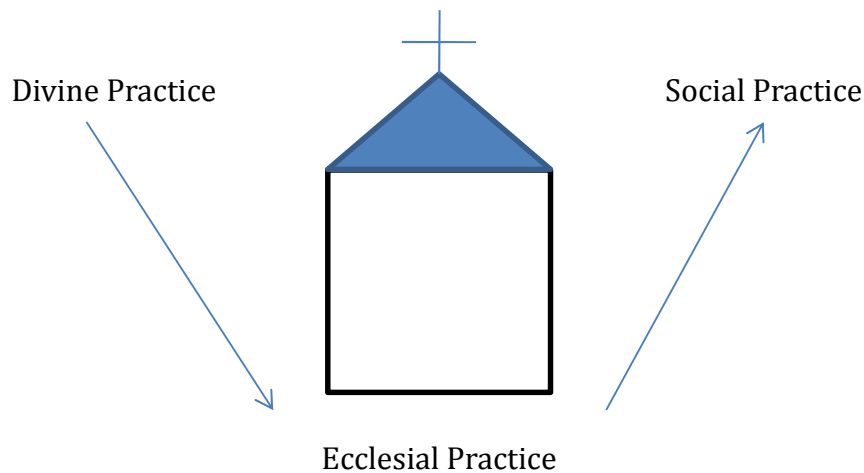
Wesley Fellowship Group members have the whole components of serving together and growing together. They really do care for one another. Through class meeting, each participant saw the need and started stepping up to help out with the hospitality and made that a welcoming place. Connecting, growing, and journeying together in Christ forms disciples as they reflect on and share their answers to a single question, "How's your spiritual life?" Then see where the Holy Spirit leads. The class meeting played a crucial role in setting aside time to connect with other Christians, to receive encouragement to grow in their discipleship, and to spiritually mentor one another.

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<sup>20</sup> Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience* Kevin M. Watson (2014), 12.

- **Theresa F. Latini’s Small Group Ministry**

Theresa F. Latini stated in her book, “The church and the crisis of community: a practical theology of small-group ministry,” she presented a practical theology of small groups (Ecclesial Practice) that seeks to help the church live more faithfully at this intersection between God’s work of reconciliation (Divine Practice) and the yearning for community in the United States today (Societal Practice).



Practical theology often begins with questions arising from or everyday experience, especially in the church. The agenda can range from general spiritual growth to specific topics such as marriage, recovery, divorce, job, or parenting. Since practical theology is faced with conflicts and concerns about effective and faithful church practices, “small groups can help reform current church life and ministry (Ecclesial Practice) according to the life-act of God (Divine Practice) for the sake of the world (Societal Practice).”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, small groups help the church connect with God, each other, their congregations, and people outside the church.

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<sup>21</sup> Theresa F. Latini, *The church and the crisis of community: a practical theology of small group ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 7.



In order for the church to conform the church's practice to God's practice, Latini asserts that the church desperately needs authentic and life-transforming spiritual practices through small-group ministries. Latini ended her study of practical theology of small groups with divine practice, ecclesial practice, and social practice.

And yet, the church's practice must be contextually relevant and respond to the context of local church to conform the church's practice to God's practice. Her practical theology help us examine the importance of context of the church and the ways small group members in local churches (what is happening in the church) connect with God (what God is doing in the church and the world).

## CHAPTER IV.

### *THE POSTMODERN CHURCH*

#### ❖ **Christians Community in a Postmodern World**

We live in a postmodern world. But what exactly does this mean when we say we live in a postmodern world? Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franks spoke of “the postmodern as the rejection of the central features of modernity.”<sup>22</sup> It means that the paradigm of the modernity has shifted to postmodernism. To understand postmodern, it helps to consider the main differences among pre-modernism, modernism and *post-modernism* that is relate to the source of authority.

- **Pre-modernism**

The primary nature of knowledge of the pre-modern era was based upon revealed knowledge from an authoritative source – the church. In pre-modern times it was believed that ultimate truth could be known mainly through divine revelation, accessible only through the teachings of the church. This divine revelation was generally assumed to come from God. Therefore, the church enjoyed the privileged power position.

- **Modernism**

There were two new dominant approaches in the modern era. The first was empiricism (knowing through our five senses-sight, smell, touch, taste, sound), which gradually evolved into scientific empiricism. In other words, science became the source

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<sup>22</sup> Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond foundationalism: shaping theology in a postmodern context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 21.

for truth and reality and people believed that our sensory perception was reliable. The second approach of this period was reason. Often, science and reason were in conjunction with each other. Therefore, the sources of authority moved from the church to universities (scholars or professors). Modernists reject Christianity as the foundation of human understanding. As a result of these new dominant approaches, the church no longer enjoyed the privileged power position.

- **Postmodernism**

In the modern era, science became the only source for truth and reality. And yet, the foundation of modernism has been shaken by the new theory of faulty sense perception raised by 17th-century French philosopher, Rene Descartes, who was also called the father of modern western philosophy. He discovered that our five senses-sight, smell, touch, taste, sound – cannot give absolute certain knowledge about the world. Leonard Sweet asserted that “we all make mistakes. These mistakes often occur because of faulty sense perception. We think we see water on the roadway, for instance, but it turns out to be an optical illusion. We think we hear our name being called, but our hearing is impaired. We think we’re tasting beef, but it turns out to be deer.”<sup>23</sup>

We have lost certainty in a postmodern world because our sensory perception is not one hundred percent reliable. In the postmodern era, there is no single defining source for truth and reality beyond the individual. The postmodern view of truth is both subjective and relative.

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<sup>23</sup> Leonard I. Sweet et al., *Postmodern and Wesleyan?: exploring the boundaries and possibilities* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2009), 27-28.

Stanley Grenz writes that “scholars disagree among themselves as to what postmodernism involves, but they have reached a consensus on one point: this phenomenon marks the end of a single, universal worldview. The postmodern ethos resists unified, all-encompassing, and universally valid explanations. It replaces theses with a respect for difference and a celebration of the local and particular at the expense of the universal. Postmodernism likewise entails a rejection of the emphasis on rational discovery through the scientific method, which provided the intellectual foundation for the modern attempt to construct a better world. At its foundation, then, the postmodern outlook is anti-modern.”<sup>24</sup>

As Grenz points out, the unique characteristic of the postmodern period is that modernism has not been replaced by another worldview, but rather by an *anti-worldview* that questions the sources of authority. For example, “There is still considerable debate over what this means because this new mode of communication supplement, rather than replace, existing ones. Looking back, no new media has ever completely replaced an older one. When radio came along in the 1920s and 1930s, everyone predicted the death of the newspaper, but that did not happen. Then everyone thought TV would wipe out radio, but that did not happen either. The internet hasn’t diminished radio or TV, and in 1999 more books were sold than ever before.”<sup>25</sup>

In other words, postmodern approaches seek to deconstruct previous authority sources and power. Instead of relying on one approach to knowing, they tried to explore

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<sup>24</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *A primer on postmodernism* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Andi, 2001), 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> Robb Redman, *The great worship awakening: singing a new song in the postmodern church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 143.

multiple ways of knowing. This can include the pre-modern ways (revelation) and modern ways (science and reason), along with many other ways of knowing such as intuition, relational, and spiritual. In a postmodern world, truth and reality are understood to be individually shaped by personal history, social class, gender, culture, and religion without any universal application. These factors should knit together to shape the narratives and meanings of our lives.

❖ **How is this impacting the church?**

Christianity has entered the era of postmodernism and many scholars are studying the changing thoughts and practices of postmodern Christians that are distinctive of the earlier Christians. In this vein, Leonard Sweet asserts that “postmodernism is not a belief, but a position one holds. It is influencing the beliefs of the church because the ways we come to faith are undergoing changes, as determined by the rapidly changing worldviews of the people who make up this global community of humankind.”<sup>26</sup>

- **Styles of Worship**

Robb Redman stated that significant renewal and innovation in worship appeared at a time of transition to postmodern worship. “One impact of postmodernism on worship is its rejection of absolute truth and the resulting emphasis on personal experience as the arbiter of truth.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Leonard I. Sweet et al., *Postmodern and Wesleyan?: exploring the boundaries and possibilities* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2009), 14.

<sup>27</sup> Robb Redman, *The great worship awakening: singing a new song in the postmodern church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 132.

The goal of postmodern church worship service is no longer to get people to agree with Christian teaching, but rather to engender trust and belief in God. “A personal experience of God is more important than affirming Christian truth; the worship service appeal to belief is largely emotional, rather than intellectual. For example, at Willow Creek, programming staff create *moments* during the service in which the emotional and intellectual aspects of the day’s theme converge to move attenders, nudging them (gently or sometimes firmly) to faith in God. Rick Warren at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest California also urges preachers to build practical, advice-filled sermons around *felt needs*. Many of his own messages begin with the common self-help formula *how to ...*”<sup>28</sup>

In *Ancient–Future Faith*, Webber asserted that “the postmodern shift in communications from the verbal to the symbolic allows evangelicals to recover the classical Christian approach to communication and creatively apply it to worship renewal.”<sup>29</sup> Webber observes that young adults, particularly teens, move away from classical music and pipe-organ to the contemporary worship and praise songs. They are exploring a new liturgical worship; “the combination of ancient forms of faith within contemporary styles is a powerful and intoxicating combination that appeals to the young in this age of postmodernity.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Redman, *The great worship awakening: singing a new song in the postmodern church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 134-135.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Webber, *Ancient-future faith rethinking evangelicalism for a postmodern world* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1999), 94.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Webber, “Youth Discovering Ancient Worship.” (Worship Leader, Nov/Dec 2000)

Postmodern churches are less afraid of emotional expression than moderns; they seek worship where it is welcome. Furthermore, young people avoid a church that resists multimedia technology and image-based communications. A liturgical church where the service is strictly by the verbal is not likely to attract many young adults who prepare their homework with software intended for projection or Websites. A church that fuses traditional liturgical format with multimedia images and video, and new musical styles, attracts teens and young adults.

Even though the style of liturgical worship has changed, we Christians should not be misled. Scripture warns, “Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow” (Galatians 6:7, NRSV). If you are lost in the postmodern world, the God who revealed himself through Jesus Christ is your only way out (John 14:6). He is the savior who can forgive your sins and the shepherd who can lead you out of the confusion and despair of postmodernity.

- **Denominational Identity and Loyalty**

There is less denominational identity or loyalty in the postmodern culture. Christians do not choose the church based upon their denominational church background. For example, considering the new people who joined our church, more than half of new people transferred their church membership from another denomination.

In the modern church era there have been plenty of people who are extremely loyal to their denominations, and love the history, tradition and liturgy of their denominations. And yet, as we move toward a postmodern era, there are whole group

of people who are members of any church. People are choosing churches based upon the ministry they are looking for, rather than the denomination identity.

- **Small Groups Through the Ancient/Future Lens**

Small group-based ministry was common throughout Acts. Small group ministry in the early Christian church played an essential role in the rapid growth and ultimate triumph of Christianity. They became witnesses—through their words, lives, and suffering. Because of their small size, church ministry maintained a family-like atmosphere and practiced brotherly love in personal and effective ways. The early church ministry written in Acts 2 has a lot to teach today’s small groups. We often quote Acts 2 when we talk about the kind of small groups we want. We love the picture of community in Acts 2:42-47 (NRSV):

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

The Methodist class meeting, called Methodism’s “one striking and original contribution to the institutions of the church,”<sup>31</sup> followed a plan used by the early church. In the first-century church, Christians learned in small groups the nature of the new faith

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<sup>31</sup> Robert William Dale, *The old evangelicalism and the new* (London: Hardpress, 2012), 31-32.



and received instruction to make them intelligent followers of Christ. Modern educators have discovered the dynamism latent in group relationships and the interaction of individuals within the groups. Kevin Watson, assistant Professor at Candler School of Theology, states that “Class Meetings made sure that every Methodist was connected to other Methodists, so no one was left out, ignored, or overlooked.” and. “They relentlessly focused every Methodist on the current state of their relationship with God. And they connected people to others who were at different stages of the Christian life.”<sup>32</sup>

We are living in postmodern era. Stanley Grenz in the preface to, “Making sense out of church (2003),” provokes us to rethink the effectiveness of our current ministry paradigms. The “grave implications” to which Grenz refers are evident to those involved in church ministry. Many of our congregations seem stuck in *cultural lag*, a slow or delayed response to changing paradigms, resulting in the loss of relevance or impact.

Therefore, churches in postmodern era need to rethink and find new forms of church ministry in order to revitalize the congregation in a rapidly shifting postmodern church environment. This project is an attempt to explore the practical way of revitalizing the congregation through a new form of small group ministry to best accommodate the context of Cokesbury United Methodist Church. I will attempt to construct a new form of small group ministry and its implication on my church ministry.

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<sup>32</sup> United Methodist Communications, “How’s your spiritual life? The Class Meeting for today,” The United Methodist Church, accessed March 14, 2017, <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/hows-your-spiritual-life-the-class-meeting-for-today>.

**CHAPTER V.*****APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY***

To implement small groups into the context of Cokesbury United Methodist Church, I needed to understand the given nature of the local congregation idiom and the way the gospel message confronts to understand the story of the church.<sup>33</sup> In order to analyze the congregation stories and structure of Cokesbury United Methodist Church, I used the tool of the World View Test (1982) proposed by James F. Hopewell.

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<sup>33</sup> James F. Hopewell, *Congregation: stories and structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 11.

- **Worldview Test**

In order to explore the complexity of the views that church members hold, Hopewell employed a scale of world view characterizing four different ranges of beliefs expressed in the interview. The four categories can be differentiated in the following manner:<sup>34</sup>

<b>Worldview</b>	<b>Narrative Features</b>
Canonic	Reliance upon an authoritative interpretation of a world pattern, often considered God’s revealed word or will, by which one identifies one’s essential life. The integrity of the pattern requires that followers reject any gnosis of union with the pattern but instead subordinate their selfhood to it.
Gnostic	Reliance upon an intuited process of a world that develops from dissipation toward unity. The ultimate integrity of the world requires the deepening consciousness of those involved in its systemic outworking and their rejection of alienating canonic structures.
Charismatic	Reliance upon evidence of a transcendent spirit personally encountered. The integrity of providence in the world requires that empirical presumptions of an ordered world be witnessed.
Empiric	Reliance upon data objectively verifiable through one’s own five senses. The integrity of one’s own person requires realism about the way things demonstrably work and the rejection of the supernatural.

The views of persons might be located at some position between “Canonic” and “Gnostic” or between “Charismatic” and “Empiric.” The world view encompasses four

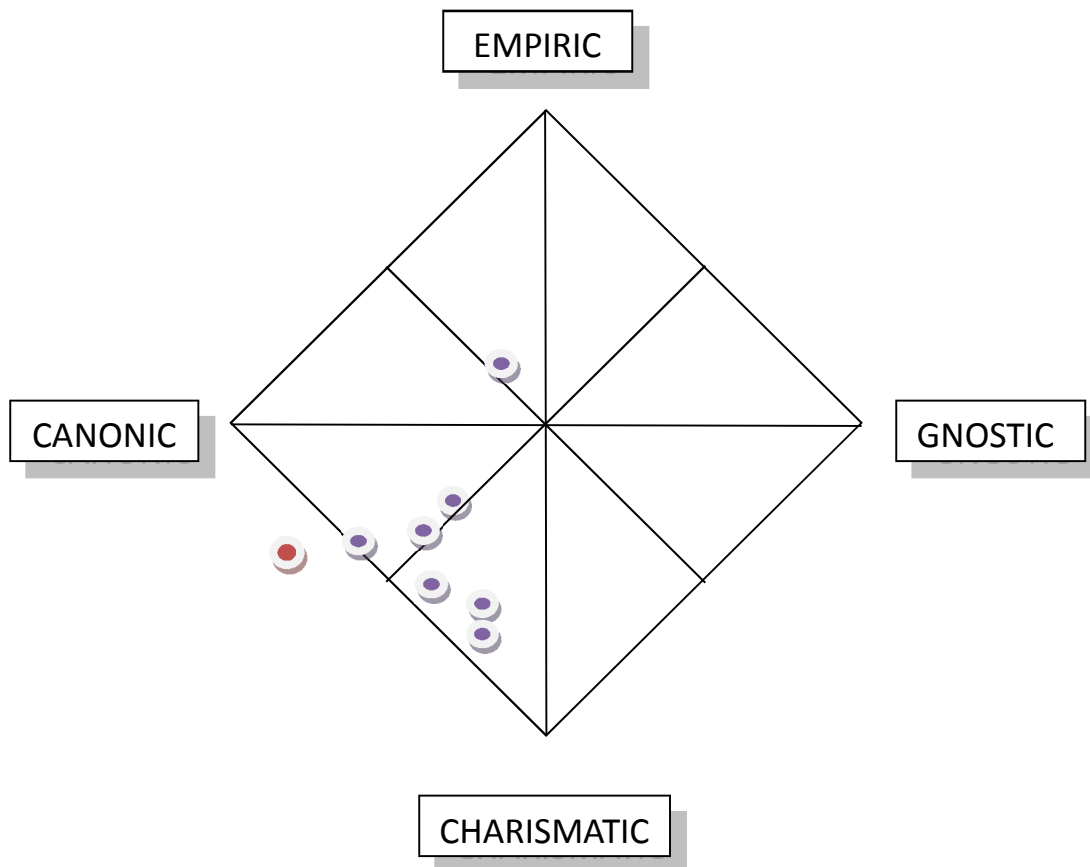
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<sup>34</sup> James F. Hopewell, *Congregation: stories and structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 69.

different ranges of beliefs about what is happening in life. This world view test helps us locate the position of the views of persons.

In order to explore the ranges of views that church members hold, eight leaders (Pastor, Lay leader, Choir director, Chair of Family Ministry, Chair of Shepherd Ministry, Lay Speaker, two committee members of Shepherd Ministry) of the church participated in this worldview test. What the scores demonstrate is that the leaders of Cokesbury United Methodist Church view the way they believe in God and act out their stories within a distinctive setting of the church.

## [World View Test]



Participants	Horizontal Axis	Vertical Axis
Lay leader	CA(11) - GN(7) = 4	EM(7) - CH(2) = 5
Choir Director	CA(9) - GN(4) = 5	CH(12) - EM(2) = 10
Chair of Shepherd Ministry	CA(9) - GN(4) = 5	CH(13) - EM(1) = 12
Lay Speaker	CA(16) - GN(0) = 16	CH(8) - EM(3) = 5
Chair of Family Ministry	CA(10) - GN(3) = 7	CH(8) - EM(6) = 2
Members of Shepherd Ministry(A)	CA(11) - GN(0) = 11	CH(10) - EM(6) = 4
Members of Shepherd Ministry(B)	CA(10) - GN(4) = 6	CH(11) - EM(2) = 9
Pastor	CA(21) - GN(0) = 21	CH(6) - EM(0) = 6

- **The Implications of Worldview Test**

The four world view categories helped organize the interpretation of the belief patterns of Cokesbury United Methodist Church. The result of the world view test shows that the leaders of Cokesbury United Methodist Church have consistency in the world view.

### WORLD VIEW CATEGORIES <sup>35</sup>

Cognitive Features	Worldview	
	Canonic	Charismatic
Authority	God's revealed word and will	Personally manifested evidence of God's immanence
Focus of Integrity	Scripture	Providence of God
Valued Behavior	Obedience	Recognition of God's blessings

The cluster of the congregations' scores is a mixture of Canonic and Charismatic categories. I have found those narrative features from eight people (including myself) in my church ministry.

My scores are "21" at Horizontal axis and "6" at vertical axis, which means that the way I believe in God and act out my story is in the mixture of Canonic and Charismatic categories. I am delighted that my personal scores are close to the mean orientation of congregation, which helps me enjoy a more satisfying relationship with my congregations.

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<sup>35</sup> James F. Hopewell, *Congregation: stories and structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 70.

### WORLD VIEW CATEGORIES <sup>36</sup>

Cognitive Features	Worldview	
	Canonic	Empiric
Authority	God's revealed word and will	Data objectively verifiable through one's five senses
Focus of Integrity	Scripture	One's person
Valued Behavior	Obedience	Realism

And yet, only one member has a mixture of Canonic and Empiric categories. His scores are "4" at Horizontal axis and "5" at vertical axis. He is a retired school principal. Probably his career as a principal of public school helps him have a mixture of Canonic and Empiric worldview.

- **Worldview Test and Its Biblical Implications of Revitalizing Congregation through Small Groups**

Members of Cokesbury United Methodist Church have grown spiritually over the last three years. And this drives me to step further into the issue of church revitalization. For my entire career in church ministry I was challenged by the issue of congregational development and revitalization.

As I work on the issue of church revitalization, I found Acts to be a valuable source to understand how churches grew in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and how Peter and Paul worked on the Great Commissions that Jesus asked us to do as his disciples. The book

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.,70.

of Acts puts a great emphasis on the role of preaching (which is part of *Canonic* and *Charismatic* characters) in growing churches. I am so delighted to find the same worldview from the leaders of Cokesbury United Methodist Church. Therefore, I would like to explore the biblical implications of church revitalization in the context of my church ministry.

In the process of an intellectual exploration of the congregational development and revitalization, I realize that Acts is God's textbook for church growth. Luke explains in Acts 6:7, the number of disciples increased when the word of God was proclaimed:

“The word of God continues to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7, NRSV)

The Word was delivered wherever God's people went. Acts 8 shows that the gospel has been preached by Philip and there was a great joy to anyone who received the good news. I believe that preaching is not just from the pulpit, but from the place wherever God's people go. This is part of God's ministry. This is what Jesus did to accomplish his mission on the earth. Jesus was not always in the temple to preach, but he had also been to all the places where the ministry of the Word occurred: at Cornelius' house, in synagogues, on the street, by the lake, etc. Jesus was not only a prophet, but also a preacher. Paul, for this reason, wanted to preach the gospel that Jesus commands us to do for his heavenly kingdom. Paul's ministry was not limited only in the pulpit in Acts 20:20, “I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house.”



However, Paul's ministry, just like that of Jesus, was not an easy task and sometimes it was at the risk of his life. The Apostle Paul and his companions were willing to risk their lives for the sake of Jesus Christ (Acts 15:26), but they could make it through because the Holy Spirit was always with them. The Book of Acts is, in other words, a history of the ministry of the Word in the name of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Truth showed Paul the way into all Truth. On the ministry of Paul and his companions, the Holy Spirit was with them and called them to preach the good news of God's grace.

- **Embracing the Biblical Implications on Postmodern Church Today**

I understand that Acts is God's textbook for the congregational development and revitalization for us to expect exactly the same growth story again in my church ministry. This is because we live in postmodern world. And I am serving people of God in a small community called Stedman, not Jews in Jerusalem. Even though I believe that the book of Acts is God's textbook for church growth, it was written to different people in a different context. Therefore, it is hard to jump to conclusion and say we can expect the same result from the churches in Acts, "the word of God continued to spread; the number of disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of priests became obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7, NRSV)

We live in a postmodern culture. Postmodern historians and philosophers question the representation of history and cultural identities. They reject master narratives for history and culture and pursue local narratives and ironic deconstruction of master

narratives.<sup>37</sup> I agree with the argument that was made by Don Cupitt in his book, *what is a story*. He says “the concept of truth is intimately linked to the biases of forms of expression. Truth does not, and never has, come unadorned. It must appear in its proper clothing or it is not acknowledged, which is a way of saying that the *truth* is a kind of cultural prejudice. Each culture conceives of it as being most authentically expressed in certain symbolic forms that another culture may regard as trivial or irrelevant.”<sup>38</sup>

I strongly believe that “the All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” (2Timothy 3:16, NRSV) And yet, as a pastor in the United Methodist Church, I also believe that the living core of my Christian faith was based upon the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral.”<sup>39</sup> The Quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason) has been playing crucial roles in understanding the living core of Christian doctrine such as God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God’s grace because they have the same destination—knowing God—while taking different methods and directions that complement each element’s pitfalls. It is more like a check and balance system in order to avoid a heretical understanding of the doctrines. As Paul Tillich says that our “faith as the ultimate concern is an act of the total personality,”<sup>40</sup> I need to employ the dynamic relationship of the four elements as a whole to test our faith’s authenticity. If our reason goes in a wrong direction in understanding God, our Christian tradition and experience would correct it. Therefore,

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<sup>37</sup> Don Cupitt, *What is a story?* (London: Xpress Reprints, 1995), 36.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

<sup>39</sup> *The book of discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 2008), ¶104

<sup>40</sup> Philip M. Merklinger, *Philosophy, Theology, and Hegel’s Berlin Philosophy or Religion*, (New York, Suny Press, 1993), 205.

the dialogical relationship of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason help me understand the Christian doctrines.

In particular, these four elements help me shape not only my theology, but also my faith in God. We have been experiencing God and the overwhelming acts of God throughout human history, which are passed down to us in the form of the written tradition. I believe that Acts is God's text for church revitalization. And Acts teaches us how to proclaim the word of God through the ministry of the Apostle Peter and Paul. From the Bible we can hear and see that God has spoken and has done almighty deeds, and because of this, God is no longer unknown.

We need to examine divine truth through the lenses of tradition, experience, and reason in order to discern and distinguish God's revelation in postmodern culture. In this process, theological mission as a pastor in the UMC begins with the holistic understanding of religious authority in the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral."<sup>41</sup> All four parts of Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason) are not equal. The living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, and confirmed by reason. And yet, it should be vivified in personal experience to embrace the biblical implication in postmodern society.

My theological task is to focus on those features of Wesley's discussion that are most relevant to our current interest in the issue of congregation revitalization. Therefore, in this paper I would like to apply the *Canonic* and *Charismatic* characteristic in the

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<sup>41</sup> *The book of discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 2008), ¶104

ministry of God proclaimed by Paul to the context of my local church ministry. Paul's ministry of Word can be categorized into two major characteristics:

First, Paul's ministry of Word has to do with living in the providence of the Holy Spirit. Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and Paul's life was totally transformed. It is not possible for us to do church work unless we have met Jesus on the roads of our lives and the Holy Spirit is with us. When it comes to the interactive connection between Christian ministry and the Holy Spirit, there have been many cases highlighting the work of the Holy Spirit in Church ministry. For example, by the time Saul arrived at Damascus, the Holy Spirit did not directly talk to him, but through a person named Ananias.

The Holy Spirit sometimes speaks to us through other people. While Saul and Barnabas were worshipping the Lord in the church at Antioch, the Holy Spirit sent them to Cyprus (Acts 13:2-4). Likewise, God wants each of us to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, not only to proclaim the good news of God's grace but also to fulfill God's reign in this world.

Second, Paul is a man of adventure. He risked his life in God's ministry. Therefore, pastors take the aspiration of ministry from the prophet Isaiah.

“Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”(Isaiah 40:30-31, NRSV)

When it comes to the transformation of Paul's Christian journey, I strongly believe that Saul and Ananias were an interactive small group called "class" in terms of John Wesley's perspective. We can see that without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Ananias could not have met Saul. And without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he could not have become an instrument in the hand of God to restore the sight of Saul.

"So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."(Acts 9:17, NRSV)

Paul's ministry begins through small group ministry led by the Holy Spirit, Saul was totally transformed and later he became the Apostle Paul, one of the faithful followers of Jesus and risked his life for the work of Christ. Saul's faith was incubated and grown through a spiritual fellowship with Ananias by the Holy Spirit.

In short, my vision for God's ministry at Cokesbury United Methodist Church focuses on understanding how Paul broke through challenges in his mission. My theological position in light of church growth is to reshape the mission of the church: "The mission of United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the good news of God's grace and by exemplifying Jesus' command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world."<sup>42</sup> We will reach out to people and welcome them into church, nurture them in Christian living, and send them to the mission field.

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<sup>42</sup>*The book of discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 2008), ¶121.

Christians, as followers of Christ, have to go back to the missionary movement of the early church in Acts. This process of integrating Biblical messages with the subculture of the local church is another challenge due to the different cultures involved. And yet, the theme of missionary movement in Acts should be our *propaganda*. This is because “*propaganda* is the establishment of reciprocal understanding between an individual and a group.”<sup>43</sup> *Propaganda* is the reaffirmation of our Christian faith through the apostolic ministry of Peter and Paul. Moreover, the gospel according to Matthew reaffirms the Great Commission, which is the mandatory order of Jesus Christ.

“... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20, NRSV)

Therefore, Christians living in postmodern culture have to find an effective and optimized church ministry. In this spirit we work through the power of the Holy Spirit to understand the love of God given in Jesus Christ. As we understand more fully the needs of the world, as we draw more effectively on God’s saving work, we will become better equipped to fulfill our calling as the people of God:

“Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20-21, NRSV)

Furthermore, it is noteworthy for leaders in the churches to recognize the essence of how Christian practices for the ministry of the Word, which is consisted of learning how to do God’s ministry within this changed circumstances of contemporary society as

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<sup>43</sup> Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda* (Saint Louis Park: Filiquarian Publishing, 2007), 150.

a community of disciples putting their ultimate faith, hope and love in the person and teaching of Jesus. The task of the church is to embrace God's saving grace and participate in God's saving action as we go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them in the divine act of God.

- **Why we Need Small Group Ministry at Cokesbury United Methodist Church**

Bill Easum and John Atkinson, in his book *Go Big with Small Group* describe small groups as an incubator in which new Christians are growing in love and care until they blossom. When members of local church are doing their work, Christians grow in their walk with Christ. Pastor Atkinson witnessed the importance of small group ministry to revitalize the congregation. "He started the church with five people in the living room of one-bedroom apartment. Seven and half years later (2005) the church is doing seven services a weekend with a weekly attendance of around four thousand people."<sup>44</sup>

As I explore the power of small groups, I discovered more and more churches are starting small group ministries. A small group is a group of three or more people who gather each week in a home, workplace, or online. In a group we laugh together, weep together, pray together, study the Bible together, eat together, evangelize together, and serve the poor together. It was through these small groups that we made incredible strides toward becoming a holistic disciple of Jesus. I pray that Cokesbury United Methodist

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<sup>44</sup> William M. Easum and John Atkinson, *Go big with small groups: eleven steps to an explosive small group ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), viii.

Church experience “the psychological and relational healing as they open up with others in a small group.”<sup>45</sup>

Henry Cloud and John Sims Townsend asserted in their book, “Making small groups work,” discovered that God has a surprising plan for growth through small group ministry. Small groups have a biblical foundation and connect individuals with opportunities for spiritual growth. I believe that small groups are God’s divine parts of the church and are described in the early churches. “Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:46-47, NRSV) This scripture supports why Cokesbury United Methodist Church needs a healthy and growing small group ministry.

Even though the people and context of Cokesbury United Methodist Church is different from those of Bay Area Fellowship Church which has grown to membership of over 1,000 people, I believe that there is our own way to explore congregational vitality through small group ministry. In the process of transforming church missions in our postmodern church context, Cokesbury United Methodist Church must be equipped with the Holy Spirit, with open minds, with a frontier mentality, and with humbleness to meet the challenges of crisis in the church.

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<sup>45</sup> Henry Cloud and John Sims Townsend, *Making small groups work: what every small group leader needs to know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 19.



## CHAPTER VI.

### *THE PROJECT*

- **Purpose of the Project**

The goal of this project was to explore the importance of a small group ministry in which Jesus Himself participated by implementing a small group system into the life of Cokesbury United Methodist Church. Through this project, I want people at Cokesbury United Methodist Church to understand the potential for small group ministries and show how small groups can change our spiritual practice including congregational vitality. The intention of this project is to help participants open their hearts and find the joy of meeting Jesus Christ through small group ministry.

- **Timeline for the Project**

*Week 1-2:* the leadership team (facilitators) met to plan the introductory meeting, the small group format, strategy, and curriculum on Sundays, February 8 and February 15.

*Week 3-8:* a small group met once a week on Wednesday during the season of Lent 2015(February 25, March 4, March 11, March 18, March 25, April 1)

- **Implementation of the Small Group to the Local Church**

Participants gathered in a small group during the season of Lent to learn from and encourage one another for reflection and spiritual growth. The reason why I chose the season of Lent for my project was because it was a time of repentance and preparation for the coming Easter. I wanted people in my church to move forward on their faith journey to Easter from Lent.

The participants were trained to open their heart and mind to the Good News of Jesus Christ and to grow deeper in their Christian life. To provide this training, I used a DVD with a participant' guide, "The Last Days of Jesus: Six In-depth Studies Connecting *the Bible to Life*" published by Zondervan.

[Small Group VIDEO: The Last Days of Jesus]

Week	The Message
1 <sup>st</sup>	From Warrior to Servant Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 16:13-28) Dr. Matt Williams
2 <sup>nd</sup>	A Glimpse of Glory The Transfiguration ( Matthew 17:1-9) Dr. Susan Hecht
3 <sup>rd</sup>	The Rejected King The Triumphal Entry (Matthew 21:1-5) Dr. Mark Strauss
4 <sup>th</sup>	Love to the Full The Last Supper (John 13:1-5, Matthew 26:21-29) Dr. Scott Duvall
5 <sup>th</sup>	The Ultimate Victory The Trial and Death of Jesus (Luke 22:66-23:3; 23:32-34, 44-47) Dr. Darrell Bock
6 <sup>th</sup>	The Death of Death The Resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:1-10) Dr. Gary Burge

The format of small group began with gathering & welcoming and opening prayer. Along with prayer, the facilitator would help connect the theme of the week with life. At this point the facilitator would present several questions about spiritual life to the group:

“Where have you experienced God in your life last week?”

“What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?”

“What temptations have you met with?”

“How were you delivered?”

“What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?”<sup>46</sup>

Each participant saw the need and started stepping up to help out with the hospitality and make that a welcoming place. Connecting, growing, and journeying together in Christ forms disciples as they reflect on and share their spiritual journey. Then see where the Holy Spirit leads. Then, the group turns their attention to the Bible study watching Video lessons (making deeper connection to the Bible), reflects on our life and our parish, prays intercessory prayer, and sends forth. At the end of each session, the facilitator will ask the group to evaluate the experience asking how the group gathering went.

To implement this project, I recruited as a Lay Advisory Committee (a leadership team) and met the members of the LAC on Sundays, February 8 and February 15 to design the small group ministry project and make the church a place of vitality where the congregations grow in their faith through this training process.

The members of the Lay Advisory Committee consist of: a lay person who had been instrumental in starting small groups in his own church, Mr. Jerry McCall, our lay leader and a chairperson of LAC; Ms. Laverne Sparr, a chairperson of “Shepherd

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<sup>46</sup> Albert Cook. Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), 181.

ministry”<sup>47</sup>; Mr. Douglas Bryant, a member *Shepherd ministry* and a chairperson of adult ministry; Mr. Billy Culbreth, a member *Shepherd ministry* and a lay speaker; Mrs. Betty Staring, a member *Shepherd ministry*; Mrs. Susan Worthington, a member *Shepherd ministry*; and myself.

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<sup>47</sup> The Shepherd Ministry Committee of Cokesbury United Methodist Church consists of eleven leaders (Shepherds). Each shepherd is in charge of 8 to 12 members. This ministry has been designed to take good care of the congregations.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT*

- **Small Group Evaluation**

The evaluation of the small group ministry was completed by a questionnaire.<sup>48</sup> The small group evaluation form was administrated and collected by the facilitator of *Bennett* and the chairperson of Lay Advisory Committee. The evaluation starts by asking small group participants to describe the effectiveness and fruitfulness of the small group gatherings.

The overall evaluations of the small group were positive and their responses to the two major questions were summarized as below.

- How did the practice of weekly small group ministry help your faith growth?

“A lot”

“More knowledge of scriptures”

“It brought warmth to my heart”

“Bible study uplifts”

“It has helped me stay spiritually focused”

- Describe the overall evaluation of the small group.

“Can communicate better”

“Enlightening and informative”

“Helpful to the group”

“Awesome friends”

“Awesome fellowship”

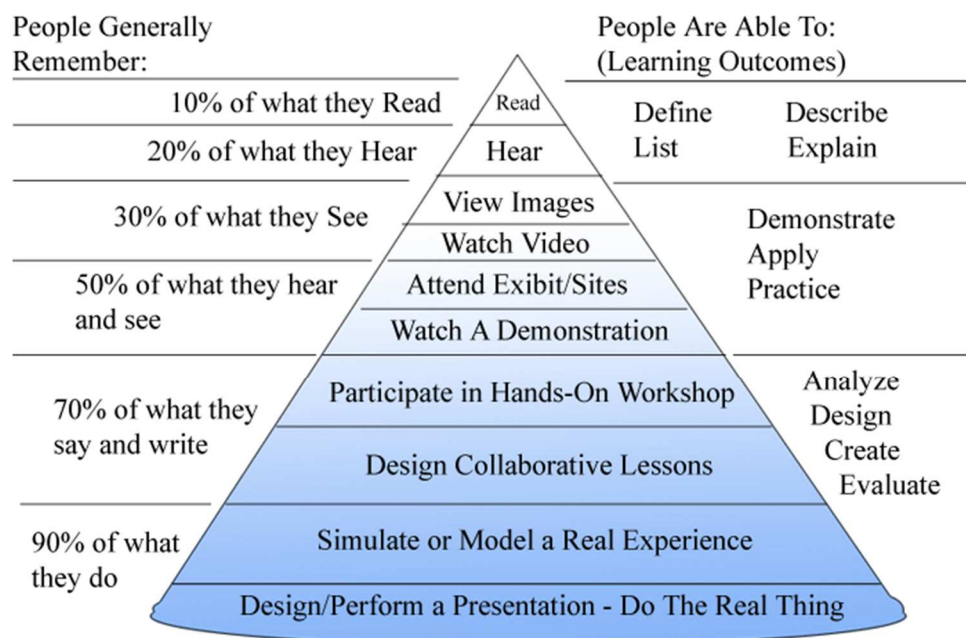
“This is a very positive group because of the spiritual fellowship”

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<sup>48</sup> See Appendix C.

- **Why did I choose a DVD for this project?**

The use of educational audio/visual medium in classrooms has risen steadily over the past decades because post-moderns open the door to narrative and image as mode of perceiving and knowing and this medium is highly valued as a means of teaching more effectively and creatively. In 1946, Edgar Dale developed the “Cone of Experience.”<sup>49</sup> In the Cone of Experience, Edgar Dale asserts that “people will generally remember: 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, and 50% of what they hear and see.”



**Dale's Cone of Experience**

[Adapted from E. Dale, *Audiovisual Methods in Teaching*, 1969, NY: Dryden Press.]

<sup>49</sup> Edgar Dale, *Audio-visual methods in teaching* (New York: Dryden, 1969), 108.

Robb Redman also asserts that “the rise of postmodernism corresponds with the rise of electric media.” In particular, “Audio/visual medium has a powerful impact on how post-moderns understand their world. Image-based postmodern communication is multisensory, fast-paced, and complex.”<sup>50</sup> The rise of audio/visual media and this new medium has a powerful impact on how post-moderns understand their world.

The reason why I chose the popular medium of DVD for this small group project was based upon my assumption that an audio/visual medium (DVD) is an effective educational communication tool for the participants who are accustomed to a postmodern culture. Matt Williams edited “The Last Days of Jesus: Six In-depth Studies Connecting *the Bible to Life*” (the book I used for this training) to communicate more effectively with Christians in a postmodern culture.

Matt Williams states that the idea of the *Deeper Connections Series* began with his concern of how the Bible applies to the contemporary Christians in the context of the local church. At his preface of participants’ guide Matt Williams asserts that “we all know Christians who are bored with Bible study– not because the Bible is boring, but because they haven’t been introduced to its meaning in its first-century context and how that is significant for our lives today. When we begin to understand some of these *Deeper Connections* – both to the first century and to the twenty first century – our lives are transformed.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Robb Redman, *The great worship awakening: singing a new song in the postmodern church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 141-142.

<sup>51</sup> Darrell L. Bock et al., *The last days of Jesus. six in-depth studies connecting the Bible to life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 7.

The overall evaluations of using a DVD for this project were successful. The *Deeper Connections* teachers have one foot in the historical, biblical text and the other in the modern world. For instance, the first session was about “Jesus the Messiah” (Matthew 16:13-28). The teacher, Dr. Matt Williams, begin his lecture at the region of Caesarea Philippi where Peter actually met Jesus in the Bible. Through the popular medium of DVD, the participants could interact with each other. I would like to continue to bring an audio/visual medium for the small group ministry.

- **Impact on the church Ministry**

The small group ministry during the season of Lent made a huge impact on the participants. Participants in the small group made an impact on their faith, their relationship with God and one another. They encouraged one another for reflection and spiritual growth. We grew closer to Christ as we meet regularly and pray to be faithful body of Christ.

God did not intend for us to go it alone. We were created for fellowship. God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” (Genesis 2:18, NRSV) “Doing the Christian life deeply together” can be seen in the practices of some of the first believers, following Pentecost, as outlined in Acts 2:42-47. The Bible constantly uses “terms like put together, join together, built together, members together, heirs together, fitted together, and held together.”<sup>52</sup>

As we gathered together to ask for the Lord’s blessings, participants in a small group were transformed and became the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul emphasized the

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<sup>52</sup> Richard Warren, *The purpose driven life* (Cleveland: Findaway World, 2005), 130.



body of Christ in his epistle to the Corinthian church: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27, NRSV)

I believe that the whole church can be transformed when each body complete their mission as body of Christ. I also believe that through a small group gathering the participants have become more responsible members of church. Through the grace of God, participants could build relationship one another and grow in faith.

The evaluation from small group participants proves the effectiveness and fruitfulness of the small group gatherings. I pray that the backbone of the church, *Bennett* Sunday school, persuade the small groups of *Patton* (B-Boomers) and *John Roberts* (Gen-X) to be incorporated as responsible members into the church as the body Christ.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *CONCLUSION*

I began this project by suggesting that the congregation can be revitalized through small group ministry with members of *Bennett* Sunday school group because they are the backbone of the church. Now as I come to the end of the dissertation, it would seem appropriate to consider the words of the Apostle Paul when he wrote:

“Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.” (Philippians. 3:13-15, NRSV)

This project is an attempt to explore the practical way of revitalizing the congregation through small group ministry and now I know that small group ministry at Cokesbury United Methodist Church has been fruitful through the project administered to *Bennett* Sunday school. Participants gathered in a small group during the season of Lent had a time of reflection and spiritual growth. Later in our evaluation of the project, those participants who went through small group gathering said, “It brought warmth to my heart,” “Bible study uplifts,” “It has helped me stay spiritually focused,” “It was an awesome fellowship,” “This is a very positive group because of the spiritual fellowship.”

I believe that small group gathering during the season of Lent at Cokesbury United Methodist Church opened a new door in making true disciples. In the small group meeting the participants prayed with one another and sought God together. They developed a deep and personal relationship one another and support for their Christian life and faith. This project was an attempt to explore ways which facilitate a disciple

making process through the small group ministry so that the church can once again be a place of vitality where the congregations grow spiritually to become in every respect the mature body of Christ. However, this project is not meant to provide a panacea for all church growth. Small groups are only one of important factors for church growth.

The Rev. Robert J Duncan Jr., a retired United Methodist Minister and Core Faculty in the Global Online Doctor of Ministry Program at Drew Theological School asserts that in modern ministry the church grew and began to add members through Baptism and Confirmation. For example, the Modern evangelistic model of Billy Graham's rational argument that he kept repeating was:

“You have a problem”

“Sin is the cause of your problem”

“The Bible says this about sin”

“The Answer is Jesus”

“Come and Accept Him”

And yet, postmodern evangelism uses *relationships* as an approach for evangelism. “In Postmodern ministry we will need to invite the next generation to life up a relationship based ministry.”<sup>53</sup>

Jesus connected with people and invited them to follow him. He built relationships first. Jesus invited people to get to know him before he talked with them about taking up their cross and follow him. For instance, when it comes to Zacchaeus,

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<sup>53</sup> Robert J. Duncan Jr., “Postmodern approach to evangelism” (lecture, Conference Call, February 20, 2017).

Jesus saw him in a tree, called him down, and said that he was going home with Zacchaeus. Notice, it was not Zacchaeus who invited Jesus to his house for a meal. Zacchaeus was trying to see Jesus, and perhaps to avoid the crowds as well. They did not like tax-collectors because they were among the least popular people of the day. Indeed, Zacchaeus was a *chief tax-gatherer*. And yet, Jesus knew this man's name, and called him by name, and then invited Himself to Zacchaeus' house for a meal. Let's look at this brief story from the gospel of Luke:

“He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:1-10, NRSV)

Zacchaeus was curious about Jesus. And yet, he didn't come to worship Jesus that day. Zacchaeus wanted desperately to see Jesus, but the crowd was in his way — he was a short man and couldn't see over the crowd. So he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus when he came by.

The life of Zacchaeus was transformed when he encountered with Jesus. Since Jesus Christ saw his real need, he went Zacchaeus' home to spend the day with him. Jesus wanted to build a relationship with Zacchaeus. Luke doesn't inform us that Jesus

preached to Zacchaeus, scold him for his sins, or reprimanded him for not going to synagogue every week. And yet, a relationship with Jesus transformed Zacchaeus.

In Acts we can see where the apostle Paul followed Jesus' example. Paul connected with people and invited them to come and receive God's saving grace. He also built relationships first:

“In Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet and had never walked, for he had been crippled from birth. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. And Paul, looking at him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And the man sprang up and began to walk. When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!” Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, “Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good—giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy.” Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.” (Acts 14:8-18, NRSV)

The Apostle Paul came across a man who had been crippled from birth. Paul focused on him. He saw his need. He perceived his faith. Paul met people at their point of need and connected with them there. A relationship with the Apostle Paul transformed the man who could not walk. Paul offered them an invitation to come and accept his God.

And yet, many churches and leaders miss the relationship based ministry for the postmodern culture. In Postmodern ministry we need to use relationships as an approach

for evangelism. In this context, small groups could be one of these *entry points* of invitation or may serve as a way to secure the next generation for the church if we invite persons to join us. Once a small group was organized, the small group leader's role is to facilitate and encourage each individual member to grow in Christ.

When I think about the characteristics of leadership, I like the image of geese flying together in a "V" formation. This image reminds us of the important characteristics of leadership we need in the church ministry, particularly in a small group ministry.



Nicholas Guzman states that the reason why they are in a "V" formation when migrating is that the lead goose cannot stay as the leader all the time. "When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into formation and successful when building a team or in any position of influence another goose flies to the point position. The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up with their speed. When a goose gets sick or wounded, two geese drop out of formation and follow it to help and protect it.

They stay with it until it dies or able to fly again. Then, they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.”<sup>54</sup>

We know that everybody in a small group is needed. Everybody has responsibility. In his epistle to people in the Corinthian church, the Apostle Paul narrates the importance of one body with many members, “Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ...If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1Corinthians 12:14-27, NRSV)

Since Christ and his church form one body, each body influences the growth of others in their relational circle. When every group member is responsible to walk with

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<sup>54</sup> Nicholas Guzman, Success Coach at Elite International Marketing Group Follow, “Leadership 101, Story of the Geese – Why geese fly in a V formation?,” LinkedIn SlideShare, January 18, 2013, , accessed March 12, 2017, <https://www.slideshare.net/mrmomentum/leadership-101-story-of-the-geese-why-geese-fly-in-a-v-formation>.

Jesus Christ and make a difference in the life of church, the body will be transformed and incorporated as responsible members into the church as God's Messianic community.

However, postmodern ministry is not simple to define or describe, but subjective and relative to some people in a context of the local church. Therefore, it may be hard for us to conclude that small group ministry is an exclusive panacea for the evangelism of the church ministry.

And yet, through this project, I realized that participants listened to each other's faith journey about how God was influencing their lives in small groups. I pray that a small group ministry can offer a more intense and personal encounter of faith and grace within a context of mutual encouragement, love, and care. I also pray that a small group ministry at Cokesbury United Methodist Church help revitalize the congregation and offer an opportunity for Cokesbury to grow deeper in our love for God and the people's lives will be changed through being in a small group as Henry Cloud witnessed in his book "Making Small Groups Work." I would like to revitalize our church with the leadership of "Bennett." Along with their spiritual leadership, I would like to focus on the small groups of the other Sunday schools: "Patton (B-Boomers)" and "John Roberts (Gen-X)."



**APPENDIX A**  
**Small Group Timetable**

Time Length (Min.)	Activity	Spiritual Discipline
0:00~0:10	Gathering & Welcoming	Fellowship
0:10~0:15	Opening Prayer	Prayer
0:15~0:25	Introduction: Video Opener from Israel	Bible
0:25~0:40	Video Discussion: Making deeper connection to the Bible	Bible
0:40~0:50	Connection the Bible to Life	Bible
0:50~0:60	Intercessory Prayer	Prayer
	Send Forth	Mission

## APPENDIX B

Small Group Evaluation Form

Cokesbury United Methodist Church

How many days each week do you pray for other members of the group?
Do you spend devotional time in reading the Scripture and prayer on a regular basis? How often?
How often do members communicate with each other by phone or email to show active and ongoing concern?
Are there tangible signs that you have grown Spiritually?
Has the group discussed possible mission ideas?
Has the small Bible study group helped with you practicing spiritual discipline?
<p>Please circle the spiritual discipline that was practiced through your participation of a small group and describe in what way?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability _____</li> <li>• Fellowship _____</li> <li>• Bible Reading and studying _____</li> <li>• Prayer _____</li> <li>• Worship _____</li> <li>• Mission _____</li> <li>• Stewardship _____</li> </ul>
How did the practice of weekly small group help your faith growth?
Describe the overall evaluation of the small group.

APPENDIX C  
Small Group Bible Study Questionnaire

Cokesbury United Methodist Church

Your Cooperation is needed to determine the effectiveness of Wednesday Bible Class.

*Please complete the following questions about yourself*

Are you a member of Cokesbury UMC? If so, how long have you been a member?
What is your gender? Male ( ), Female ( )
What is your age bracket? 50-60 years ( ), 60-70 years ( ), 70-80 years ( ), 80 or over ( )
How long have you lived in the area?

**APPENDIX D**  
**World View Test**

Circle the letter of the answer that you gave to each of the questions. (If you left the question unanswered, mark an X, but try to pick just one)

1. At its best my faith is:

a	concerned for humanity's highest values
b	filled with the Holy Spirit
c	born again in Christ
d	aware of my own divinity

2. When I die:

a	God will continue to bless and keep me
b	I shall then be with Christ
c	I journey on toward greater oneness with God
d	What will be, will be

3. When I see a picture of a starving child, I think that :

a	If everyone did God's will, this would not happen
b	the child is nevertheless a spiritual being nourished in other way
c	we live in an unfair society
d	God is with him and can ease his trouble

4. I feel that I mature as I:

a	seek and receive God's gifts
b	follow God's plan for me
c	learn to love
d	realize the divine potential within me

5. Jesus Christ provides

a	salvation from my sins
b	miraculous power in my own life
c	an example of life in tune with the absolute
d	freedom and self-reliance

6. I get in touch with God primarily through:

a	deep study of the Bible
b	experiences of God's presence with me
c	close human relationship
d	shutting out the world and communing with my innermost self

7. Worship is most meaningful:

a	at times of mystery and silence
b	when the Word is faithfully heard
c	in the midst of a caring ministry
d	when God's Spirit is manifested

8. When a young mother has cancer:

a	I know she could find real peace in the Bible
b	I know the life often contains great suffering
c	I must realize that all things work together for the highest good.
d	I pray that God will heal her

9. Were a person close to me dying, I would:

a	find strength to persevere
b	expect comfort from God
c	recognize how divine life sheds the limits of this world
d	stress the importance of the state of that person's situation

10. In the worst times of my life I find:

a	the divinity within me shows my troubles to be less crucial
b	comfort in verses from the Bible
c	patience until better times
d	God blessings me in new ways

11. Some non-Christian people claim the ability to predict the future. I think

a	these predictions may rather contact with universal intelligence
b	they are empowered by the devil
c	they are probably mistaken
d	the only disclosure of the future is that written in Christian scripture

12. I would like the next pastor of my church to be gifted in:

a	presenting sound Christian doctrine
b	bringing in God's power
c	deepening our fellowship with each other
d	uncovering the untapped powers of the mind

13. In the future I want to:

a	ask God for all the blessings God has in store for me
b	cultivate deeper levels of consciousness
c	really get into the Bible
d	be honestly who I am

14. As I see it, the world:

a	contains a mixture of good and bad
b	in only the surface expression of divine reality
c	is the place where God is emerging victories
d	troubled by the loss

15. When someone I knew died, I was basically:

a	consoled that death is an illusion of this world
b	thankful for ( or concerned about) the person's relation with Christ
c	strengthened by God's closeness
d	troubled by the loss

16. God enters my life most decisively in:

a	my deep commitment
b	answers to prayer
c	the peace and harmony I discover
d	the rules by which to lead a good life

17. After I got acquainted with the new pastor in my church, I hope that we would:

a	see each other as ordinary friends
b	share testimony about our wonderful growth in Christ
c	explore the signs that reveal God's truth
d	learn together from God's Scripture

18. As a citizen I follow the laws of my country because:

a	disobedience obscures the divine pattern
b	I agree with the law
c	God blesses those who pay and obey
d	I am to obey the authority

19. God speaks to me:

a	through the words of the Bible
b	through the power I share with all of my life
c	through meaningful human relationship
d	sometimes directly

20. When someone I love is very ill, I pray that this person

a	be miraculously healed
b	accept the will of God in this situation
c	gain awareness of healing participation in divine perfection
d	be skillfully cared for by doctors

21. Satan is:

a	an old way of talking about evil in the world
b	a name for the illusion that blocs full consciousness
c	the ruler of the dammed
d	active in individuals today

22. Were my family to suffer deep financial loss, I would :

a	look for God to change the situation
b	nevertheless prosper according to principles of divine abundance
c	adjust and go one
d	obey God

23. Earlier this year a neighbor complained that a ghost was in her house. I think that :

a	it could be a demon and be driven away by the power of Christ
b	she should move beyond such negative forms of thought
c	such a strange occurrence should lead her to God
d	there is probably a scientific explanation for her experience

24. When someone grow senile, I think that this situation is:

a	part of God's will that someday we may understand
b	a temporary condition not truly showing his continuing progress toward God
c	still ripe for God's blessing that person
d	just an unfortunate fact of life

25. In the next decade our nation:

a	will be faced with critical decisions
b	could escape its present level of discord
c	will be punished if it fails to live up to its covenant with God
d	must claim the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit

26. To me a horoscope drawn up by an expert:

a	is dangerous because it brings ungodly powers into your life
b	is wrong because God, not the stars, determines my life
c	may be helpful
d	may be entertaining but is otherwise worthless

27. In listening to sermon I feel dissatisfied unless the minister preaches:

a	about our unity with God
b	a spirit-filled message
c	a convicting message from the Bible
d	with reference to everyday situations



**WORLD VIEW TEST**  
**INSTRUMENT SCORE SHEET**

Circle the letter of the answer that you gave to each of the questions. (If you left the question unanswered, mark an *X* in the space provided.) At the bottom of each column write the number of responses that you circled in that column. Your total number of responses should equal 27.

1	a	c	b	d	Unanswered
2	d	b	a	c	
3	c	a	d	b	
4	c	b	a	d	
5	d	a	b	c	
6	c	a	b	d	
7	c	b	d	a	
8	b	a	d	c	
9	a	d	b	c	
10	c	b	d	a	
11	c	d	b	a	
12	c	a	b	d	
13	d	c	a	b	
14	a	d	c	b	
15	d	b	c	a	
16	a	d	b	c	
17	a	d	b	c	
18	b	d	c	a	
19	c	a	d	b	
20	d	b	a	c	
21	a	c	d	b	
22	c	d	a	b	
23	d	c	a	b	
24	d	a	c	b	
25	a	c	d	b	
26	d	b	a	c	
27	d	c	b	a	
Total					
	(Em)	(Ca)	(Ch)	(Gn)	

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